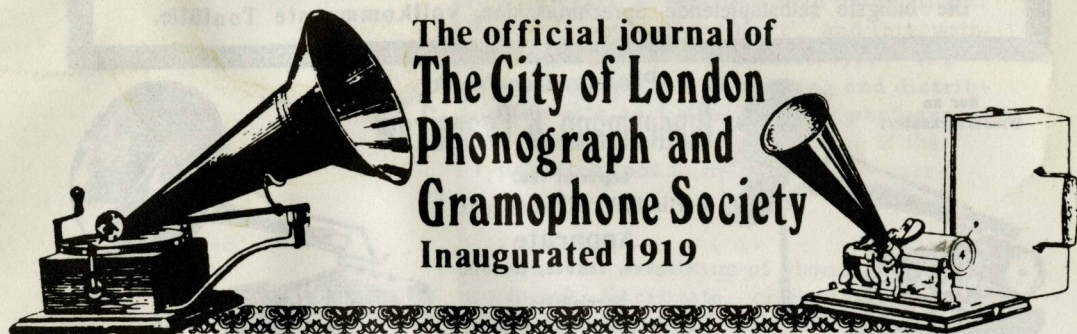


The Hillandale News



The official journal of
**The City of London
Phonograph and
Gramophone Society**
Inaugurated 1919

No. 111

December 1979



Polyphonograph-Gesellschaft Cohn & Co., Berlin S.W. Ritterstr. 184,

Specialität: Polyphonogramme erster Künstler.

Polyphonograph

Die billigste selbstspielende Sprechmaschine, vollkommenste Tonfülle.

Nur an
Wiederverkäufer!



Phonographen-Fabrik
Biedermann & Czarnikow

begründet 1887

Berlin S.W., Kreuzbergstr. 7

Apparate

elegant, sauber, tonrein.

Specialität:

Membranen, Schalltrichter

Walzenträger

nach eigenen Systemen. (D.R.G.M.)

Nur an
Wieder-
verkäufer!



Czempin & Krug

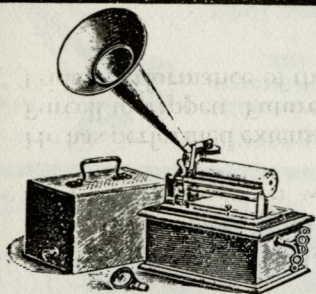
BERLIN,

Ritterstrasse 44

Phonographen. — Photographische Apparate.

Optische — Electriche Artikel.

== Illustrierte Kataloge. ==



Germania Phonographen Compagnie

G. m. b. H.

Stralauer Strasse 56, II. u. III. Etage

BERLIN C.

macht auf ihre patentirten und gesetzlich geschützten neuen
Apparate aufmerksam:

- 1) Vereinfachte Automaten, vorzüglich laut wiedergebend, niemals versagend, jede Störung des Mechanismus ist ausgeschlossen.
- 2) elektrisch betriebene Aufnahme- u. Wiedergabe-Apparate für Grandwalzen und normale Walzengrösse, unerreicht an Tonfülle.

Kein Aufziehen nothwendig!

- 3) elektrisch betriebene Automaten von vorzüglicher Klangwirkung, höchst einfach im Mechanismus.



From the Editor...

The editorial desk has been dragged kicking and screaming into the Age of Technology. From a 1920 Underwood (what a marvellous typewriter that was!) we have progressed to a 1970's electrical machine with proportional spacing. That is to say, the 'm' takes more space than the 't', and this, with a carbon ribbon, gives an effect approximating to that of printed type. The purpose is to try and reduce the ever-spiralling costs of printing and distributing Hillandale, by presenting the printer with copy which can be photographed direct on to litho plates. It would be a marvellous idea, of course, if the Editor had more proficiency at the typewriter (not to mention more spare time). As it is, I can only offer to do my best.

Member John Astin writes to tell me about his exhibition of phonographs and gramophones at the United Reformed Church, Harrogate, on September 29th. This was in aid of Cancer and Leukaemia research, and £56 was raised. The machines on display ranged from an E.M.G. to an incomplete Colibri, and included an Edison 'Fireside', an I.C.S. 'Standard' and a Diamond Disc machine. The latter was a recent addition to Mr. Astin's own collection, having apparently been rescued in surprisingly good condition from two years' sojourn in a back yard, complete with seventy discs. So they DO still turn up! Also shown was a new 'hi-fi' turntable, designed by Mr. B. Crook of Wakefield, who is looking for a commercial backer - any would-be tycoons can be put in touch with Mr. Crook, via John Astin, via the Editor. Our congratulations to Mr. Astin on his successful venture, and we look forward to hearing of further exhibitions on these lines from other members.

Another member, Paul Austwich, would like to start a branch of the Society in the West Yorkshire area; anyone interested should write to him, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. I would certainly urge anyone in that part of the world (is it what used to be called the West Riding?) to follow this up and get some local meetings organised. Mr. Austwich's address is [REDACTED] Cullingworth, Nr. Bradford, W. Yorks. BD13 5DR.

From the MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:

We have a full year of programmes planned for the London meetings, and it would be most encouraging for the speakers to see a few more members in the audience - and when you come, bring a friend with you; you may encourage him/her to join the Society. It is important to keep a note of the London dates by your calendar, as we are unable this year to keep to the same day of each month. The Almanac will carry details of programmes and alterations as necessary, and

ILLUSTRATION (Opposite page): four advertisements which appeared on a page in Die Phonographische Zeitschrift in 1901.

will be sent out with each magazine.

Please let me have details of any local affairs for inclusion in the Almanac and try to get them to me by the last week of the month immediately preceding the month of publication. (i.e. the last week of January for the February issue, the last week of March for the April magazine, and so on). Details should be sent to me at my home address, [REDACTED] Pyrford, Woking, Surrey, GU22 8TN.

Dave Roberts.

Reflections

by Paul Temple

By far the most famous use of the reflector in gramophone construction was in the Decca portable. The first model, of 1914, was introduced to the public by a full page advertisement in the Daily Mail at a reputed cost of £1,000. In these machines the end of the tone-arm extends into the centre of the lid, where it opens into a metal bowl which reflects the sound outwards. This bowl was called the 'Dulciflex'. Early models were much used by troops in the trenches during the First World War: it could easily be packed up and posted by friends and relations back in 'Blighty'. Indeed, it cost a mere 1/3d (6¹/₂p.) to send by parcel post. Although this basic design continued with only slight modifications into the 1920's, in the latter part of the decade more complicated versions were introduced. In these, the horn travels under the motor-board and opens out at the back of the case, where it is covered when not in use by a flap which opens as the lid is raised. The rest of the horn (which is mounted in a reflector) aligns itself with the horn at the back of the case. In the early 1920's, the makers also introduced a range of high quality cabinet gramophones under the name Deccalian: these also used a reflector system, some models being simply 'de luxe' versions of the well-known portable.

In the mid-1920's a range of children's tin gramophones was made with a shell-like reflector into which the end of the tone-arm opened. They were made by the Saxony firm Nier & Ehmer, with the brand-name Nirona. Among the more common types is a round model with scenes of dancing children around the sides. The word Nirona is often impressed into the grille over the front of the reflector, although '999' is sometimes found instead. These models were advertised in September 1924 at £1 5s (£1.25p.). Another relatively common Nirona machine is a rectangular tin one which is stored when not in use in a tin 'dog kennel'. The Nirona reflector was also fitted on some conventional-looking wood-cased gramophones, including some marketed in Great Britain by Sterno. Some such machines had a compartment in which the reflector and soundbox could be stored when not in use. Yet another variation was a portable, in which the reflector was mounted flush with the motor-board and covered with a fabric-backed fret. The case was not unlike the H. M. V. 101.

The only Gramophone Co. to use a reflector was the 100 portable. This has the same case as the first version of the 101, with the double needle container in the lid and a front-wind motor. The soundbox is the Exhibition, fitted on a goose-neck tone-arm. The latter opens in a slightly flared end pointing downwards into a rectangular aluminium reflector at the back of the motor-board. It is stored in the reflector when not in use, and rises into the normal playing position as it is swung forwards. The 100 was introduced in 1924, but had a short production life as it was outdated by the 101, introduced in 1925.

One of the largest firms to employ the reflector principle was Pathé. They produced a range of table models with 'bowl-in-lid' reflectors painted to resemble wood, calling these models 'Reflex'. The smallest (and the best-known in Great Britain) was the Elf, also sold in this country as the Saphone by the Saphone Company: this firm was also responsible for the Pathé-type Diamond records.

The German Polydor concern produced a 'bowl-in-lid' portable, with the tone-arm entering the reflector from the side instead of from the front, as on the Decca. Several reflector portables were also made under the Apollo banner, some of them looking very similar to the Decca externally, although the reflectors were of different kinds. A very different form of reflector was used on the German Vox machines. These had an internal wood horn which opened in front of a deflector, causing the sound to be dispersed more or less equally through fretted openings in all sides of the case.

(A Decca Junior is illustrated on Page 335. The Junior was a smaller version of the 'bowl-in-lid' design, recognisable by the slightly oval shape of the Dulciflex. The one in the illustration is a de luxe model, covered in stitched hide. It is one of the few Decca models to have the name 'Decca' on the soundbox. Our FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION also shows a form of reflector gramophone, of which the make is unknown to the Editor. It is very similar to the Camera-phone, although the imitation tortoiseshell reflector is flat-fronted instead of egg-shaped. This example has a soundbox of the 'Magnet' type and a folding arm and pivot mounted in the lid, but others seen have had a simple bent-wire arm and pivot and a German-made Exposition soundbox. All those I have seen have had oak cases, although other finishes may have been available, as they were in other 'box-camera' machines. The Peter Pan I have seen in black leathercloth, plain hide, crocodile-grained hide, oak, mahogany and teak. Can anyone identify our Front Cover model? - Ed.)

ILLUSTRATIONS WANTED:

The Editor is always on the look-out for photographs suitable for use as illustrations in 'Hillandale', with or without accompanying articles. If, for example you have a phonograph or gramophone you are unable to identify, why not send a photograph to the Editor? Publication may lead to identification.....

REPORT OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Leonard Petts: THE BIRTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED LABEL, 1901 - 1903.

It was evident, from the programme and facsimile catalogues that were handed out at the beginning of the evening, that Leonard Petts had put a considerable degree of time and effort into preparing his talk. He had also received extensive co-operation from E.M.I. in the printing of the catalogue facsimiles, of which only a limited number were printed: they were for use only at this programme. Each member of the audience was also given a copy of 'Playback', a brief history of E.M.I.

I will not give too much detail of the talk here, as they will be published eventually as a chapter in a full history of E.M.I. Much of the material has never been used in public before.

The story started with the introduction of the E.R. Johnson 10-inch disc in 1901. The Gramophone Company of Russia was formed with Mr. N.M. Rodkinson as the controller, and we heard in great detail of the formation of the Russian company and its control via Hanover and London. It was hoped that Fred Gaisberg would make some special recordings of the Czar and other members of the Royal Family and that the records could be retailed at a very 'special' price, but eventually this was found not to be possible. However, Gaisberg did take recordings of some of Russia's leading opera singers and one we heard this evening was Leonid Sobinov on a 7-inch Berliner of March 1901. This was on the first supplementary list, issued in April 1901, of thirty or so recordings.

A second recording session took place in Russia between November 1901 and January 1902, using the new 10-inch recording equipment and wax process. There was much discussion on the cost of the recordings and the issue of the first special Red Label records, which were to be double the price of ordinary records. The 7-inch Red Label discs were issued in May 1902, but some had been recorded in November 1901 and issued with Berliner labels.

From Russia the story moved to Italy, where Caruso was recorded (some doubt was shed on the famous 'Forbid you to record' telegram from W.B. Owen). Moreschi was said to have a large family and a fire in the Sistine Chapel nearly destroyed some newly-made wax recordings. Back in London, where Madame Calvé proved to be a Prima Donna of classic temperament, the first catalogue of Red Label records was issued on September 1st 1902. In France, hopes of recording Felia Litvinne were foiled when it was found she demanded a fee which was prohibitive.

However, when Tamagno was recorded in 1903, the problem was overcome by selling the records at £1 and paying him a royalty on each one sold, the first time that this was done.

The records we heard (listed on the next page) were transferred to tape for E.M.I. by Bryan Crimp and David Abdey. A suggestion was heard in the audience that this list of recordings would make a fine long playing record. May we hope that someone at E.M.I. takes note of the idea?

The Society would like to thank Leonard Petts for a very fine presentation and to thank the members of the E.M.I. staff who gave so much assistance and co-operation in the production of the programme. Thanks must also go to our own Hon. Sec. for arranging for us to use the excellent facilities of the Eccentric Club, laying on refreshments and operating the tape-recorder. A side attraction was a three-dimensional interpretation of the 'His Master's Voice' trade-mark: an 1898 Gramophone and a 1979 plaster model of Nipper, placed on the table in front of the speaker.

SOBINOV	Rudolfa's Aria ('Angelo' - Cui)	7'' Berliner 22260
VIALTSEVA	Oh! What a Glorious Night (Vrangel)	7'' Red G. & T. 23089
FIGNER	As before God and thee ('The Opritchnik'- Tchaikowsky)	10'' Red G. & T. 22549
CHALIAPIN	Sousanine's Aria ('Life for the Czar' - Glinka)	10'' Red G. & T. 22892
CARUSO	No non chiuder ('Germania' - Franchetti)	10'' Red G. & T. 52370
SISTINE CHAPEL CHOIR	Tui sunt Coeli, di Stehie	10'' Red G. & T. 54765
VAN ROOY	Leb 'wohl, du Kühnes, herrliches Kind ('Die Walküre' - Wagner)	10'' Red G. & T. 2-2685
CARUSO	Vesti la giubba ('Pagliacci' - Leoncavallo)	10'' Red G. & T. 52440
KUBELIK	Serenade (Drdla)	10'' Red G. & T. 7956
TAMAGNO	Esultate ('Otello' - Verdi)	10'' Special Red G. & T. 52673

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REPORT OF THE HON. TREASURER'S PROGRAMME, October 6th.

It seems to be becoming a pleasant tradition that the Treasurer gives a short programme following the A.G.M., and, with the figures out of the way, he injects some of his gentle Liverpudlian humour into the occasion.

John McKeown provided a large Columbia Grafonola with a Plano-reflex internal horn, and Barry played a selection of records based vaguely on the Diamond Jubilee theme. We heard Violet Lorraine ('The Lady in Room 13'), two seconds of 'Popeye the Sailor Man', the Original Dixieland Jass Band ('Sensation') and Billy Bennett (telling us about the League of Nations, which was formed in 1919). Finally, Florrie Forde asked 'Has anybody here seen Kelly?', the Jubilee connexion being that the Isle of Man was understood to be celebrating 1,000 years of something or other. A short programme because Barry had to return to his native land before his ticket turned into a pumpkin.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1979

Among the business discussed at the A.G.M. was the problem of our annual turnover, which was approaching the level at which it would be necessary to register with the Customs and Excise for purposes of Value Added Tax. Apart from adding 15% to the price of subscriptions and spares sold by the Society, this would have entailed a very heavy burden of extra book-keeping on the Treasurer. The solution to this problem which we have adopted is to discontinue the spares service altogether: fortunately, this does not mean that spares will cease to be available, as a separate business is being

established by two Officers of the Society, to manufacture and supply spares as before. While the Society will have no control over the operation, the goods will continue to be advertised in our publications. Also discussed were the problem of rising costs in production of the magazine, the possibility of holding national (as distinct from local) meetings outside London and the re-drafting of the Society's Rules.

This last arose because the Chairman, having become Editor and therefore having to read all the 'small print' in the magazine at proof stage, had noticed that various changes made to the Rules over the years had not been incorporated in the printed version. (It so happens that the Rules were about to be removed from the magazine anyway, as they are now incorporated on the new Membership Card - of which a large number were printed just before the new Editor took over!)

The Rules as proposed and agreed at the A.G.M. are as follows:

1) NAME

The society shall be known as the City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society.

2) AIMS & OBJECTS

To encourage the social intercourse of members and the historical, musical and scientific study of the reproduction of sound.

3) OFFICERS

The officers of the Society shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Meetings Secretary. They shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting, except for the President, who shall be elected for a term of five years. All officers shall be ex officio members of the Committee.

4) MANAGEMENT

The management of the Society shall be vested in the Committee, which shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting. It shall be the duty of the Committee to carry into effect the Society's Rules. The Committee shall have the power to co-opt any member at any time, and any member so co-opted may be elected to the Committee at the next Annual General Meeting.

5) SUBSCRIPTIONS

New members may join the Society at any time upon payment of the current annual subscription. The subscription is renewable on March 1st, and new members who join during the subscription year will receive any issues so far published during that year of the Society's magazine. The rate of subscription for the ensuing year shall be determined at the Annual General Meeting.

6) FINANCES

The Treasurer shall submit an annual statement of accounts to an Auditor elected by the Society and shall furnish a balance sheet for the previous financial year for the inspection of members at each Annual General Meeting.

7) ALTERATIONS TO THESE RULES

Notice of any proposal to change these rules must be given to the Secretary in writing at least one clear month before a General Meeting.

It was felt that the Rules as they stand have one or two shortcomings, most notably the absence of any provision for Extraordinary General Meetings: this means, for example, that if an Officer should resign during his year of office, it is at present impossible to elect a successor until the next A.G.M. Some further changes to the Rules will therefore be proposed at the next A.G.M.



SOUND REFLECTIONS & ECHOES - by Barry Raynaud

Covers and Sleeves 1V: Columbia.

Columbia is a name with roots in the birth of the industry: a well-made record with, in the 1920's, a superb surface, good clear labels and a wide range of recorded works. 'The Finest Name on Record' ran the company's slogan, and, to end this series, I am looking at some of their covers - also of good, sturdy quality.

I have only one 12-inch Columbia cover, and this must be older than all those below. It is printed in gold on blue, with just one panel on one side:

THE MOST PERFECT RECORDS EVER PRODUCED
THEY WEAR TWICE AS LONG

TWELVE INCH SIZE. Pre-eminently examples of the advancement of the art of recording, these 12" records will be prized by all who admire the artistic execution of well-chosen subjects.'

Short and to the point. (The last sentence of that blurb sounds like a description of a refined but bloodthirsty dictatorship! - Ed.)

Some early 10-inch covers I have, which I am unable to date, are printed in two shades of blue:

1) 'Ask to hear the new Grafonola', and, as with the contemporary H.M.V. covers there are testimonials by well-known personalities in the musical world, this time Sir Henry Wood and Dame Clara Butt. 'The gramophone advance of the Century'. Needless to say, 'For best results, use only Columbia needles.'

(On the other side) 'The Master Musicians recording exclusively for Columbia' include the L.S.O., Pachman, Casals, Harty and the New Queen's Hall Light Orchestra. 'Columbia New Process... the greatest advance in records yet achieved. The patented processes of manufacture have ensured the elimination of surface noises.'

'The speed at which a record plays is important. Columbia records are recorded at 80r.p.m. and should be played at this speed to get the most faithful results.' Then follows a paragraph on the manufacture of their needles and another on 'Care of Records.'

2) This cover has a list of exclusive artists, and four complete

ILLUSTRATIONS (opposite page): Top, an unusual Edison Standard that appeared in a recent Christie's South Kensington sale - the tone-arm, and its attendant back-bracket and horn, may possibly be German. Once again, we would like to hear from anyone who can supply positive identification. It is certainly a commercially produced conversion, designed for the job, and not a home-made 'bitser'.

Bottom, Another view of the Diamond Jubilee dinner, with the Hon Treasurer in earnest conversation. (Photo: Len Watts)

operas: Carmen, Cavalleria, Pagliacci and La Traviata. (Were they really complete, or abridged?) On the reverse side, 'Master Musicians recording exclusively for Columbia' and Some important Columbia accessories: Speed Tester, Cleaning pad, Reviver (for cabinets, not records or users) Lubricating oil, Needles and Albums.

Did you know that Columbia featured at this time (late 1920's) the B.B.C. Wireless Symphony Orchestra?

- 3) This cover asks us to hear the new Grafonola, and reminds dealers that selling below the list price is liable to legal proceedings. (Young members may not recall the system of Retail Price Maintenance, whereby manufacturers could dictate retail prices and impose sanctions on retailers who did not adhere to them. The system survives to this day in the book trade. - Ed.)
- 4) This features vocalists and duets, and those important accessories.
- 5) A lighter mix: as well as the 'New Process' techniques, 'Some wonderful instrumental records you should have', also vocal records and humorous favourites, including Will Fyffe, George Robey and Layton & Johnstone.

The next three covers all have the painting 'Inspiration' on one side, still in two shades of blue, 'from the original picture by Bernard Partridge R.I.' The picture shows a highly romantic violinist playing to a girl in a Grecian-style flowing robe. At least, I'm no art critic, and that's my story. But seriously folks - you couldn't do this sort of thing on present-day l.p.s. (Why not? - Ed.)

The reverse of these covers are all different:

one features Charles Kullman, Mantovani and his orchestra, and Columbia needles.

The second has Charles Kullman, Eric Coates and Columbia needles.

The third tells us of those accessories again, and of two descriptive records:

DX 520 (12'')... 'The picturesque ceremony of the Helston Furry Dance (on which Katie Moss wrote the ballad) is always the subject of great local excitement when it is celebrated in early May.... The dance is a historic national folk dance, and to its gay tune, the townspeople and country folk, dressed in their best, dance in procession through the streets... one of the prettiest of all survivals. All this... has been cleverly converted into a lively descriptive sketch by Joseph Batten.'

DX 499 (12'') 'AMERICA CALLING' 'Station N - U - T - S Calling' 'This is the clever burlesque of an American radio hour broad-

cast....Eddie Pola, who wrote it, is the volatile announcer of the programmes sponsored by advertisers....hilariously gagged.... This record cleverly burlesques the American idea - a glorious parody - one of the funniest you have ever heard....Get it and enjoy it.'

Has this record ever been played at a Society meeting? Does it live up to its publicity?

We come now to the just pre-war era, and from now on all covers follow the E. M. I. group pattern - a simple cover, printed in plum-colour on buff, the first Columbia to be 'same both sides', and in much flimsier paper than before. From now on, covers are also slightly smaller. The 'Magic Notes' trade-mark appears twice on each side, with a 'Series' indication (e. g. 'Dance and Variety Series'.) As in the motor industry, big conglomerates tend to submerge the individuality of component members, leading to an indiscriminate mish-mash of styles and ideas.

Another series of covers was printed in blue on buff: 'You will enjoy this selection of Columbia records'. Artists include, on DB, DX and FB series, Ray Martin, Joan Hammond, Norrie Paramour, Josef Locke, Diana Decker, Eric Jupp, Victor Sylvestor, Doris Day and Eddie Calvert, to name just a few. A similar cover has the same heading, but is printed in red on white, with a slightly different list of artists.

Finally, Columbia follows H. M. V. and Parlophone in having a cover referring only to microgroove records, and using the same copy. Mine is purple on white, the pictorial side showing a teenage boy and girl playing records on an electric portable. For Columbia, as with most other makes, the 78 era ended about 1960-1, some years after the U.S.A. and the Continent.

Covers protect the record, making it easier to handle and preventing it from rolling off a shelf: they provide a medium for advertising records, machines and accessories as well as performers and their repertoire. On modern l.p.s they also give background information on the record within.

After Covers, there are cases and albums. The latter were widely advertised as ideal for storing and protecting records (although most record collectors today avoid them like the plague, on account of their nasty habit of taking crescent-shaped bites out of records. - Ed.) One of the more satisfactory was the East-Light box file, not unlike the same maker's well-known office files in concept. Many multi-record sets were, of course, sold in purpose-made albums, the later ones being little more than a cardboard container with a cover and a stuck-on label.

Then there were carrying cases, usually covered in rexine leatherette paper - these are still available today, differing little in general design from their progenitors. Finally, there was the humble box, used to protect records in transit. Such boxes were made of stout cardboard, with a lid that covered the box fully. Each box could hold twenty-five records in paper covers. A box of this type would cost at least £1 now, one reason no doubt why they are no longer in use. I entrust the storage of all my more valuable shellac records to these. If nothing else is ever written about them, they deserve these few lines in 'Hillandale'.

People, Paper & Things

by George Frow

The gathering together of the several corners of the Society at Bromsgrove on September 29th was a splendid idea, thanks to the Midlands branch who made the arrangements and to Dennis Norton who allowed us to use a room in his newly-opened museum. A number of stalls of machines and records appeared - there were some good bargains going, and some I thought rather dear - and I am glad to say there is already a move towards a get-together on similar lines next year when we can meet our friends again. Those interested are advised to Watch This Space. By the way, if you are in the Bromsgrove area, do visit the Norton collection in the Birmingham Road: this museum is beginning to receive national notice and deservedly so. It is a private venture with strong personal connections.

Sometimes in a newspaper one is surprised to read that the relict of a well-known personality of times long past is still alive and well, and in July of this year 1979 our Treasurer Barry Williamson sent a congratulatory letter on behalf of the Society to the widow of George Formby Sr. on her reaching her 100th birthday. He died in 1922, leaving scores of recordings on several different labels, and a high reputation as a droll comedian of the halls. Their son who used the same name (the family name was Hoy) made an even greater reputation in the thirties as a droll, with the additional help of radio, films, a ukelele and good recording. He died in 1961.

Ray Phillips, who lives in Los Angeles, tells me that he is having a long-playing record prepared of his Bettini cylinders, which should be ready before the end of the year, and this could well be common knowledge to collectors by the time these words appear. As we know, Bettini cylinders are very rare, and such a record offers a rare opportunity to hear them. They are some of the earliest recordings of serious music and I know Ray will be pleased to have them in a safe and permanent form. When further details are received, I will be happy to announce them.

Collectors of riper years will recall a microgroove transfer of a Bettini concert cylinder of Marcella Sembrich singing 'Voices of Spring', put out from a New Zealand collection many summers gone by.

Another member who will record from his collection to order is Sydney Carter, and he has prepared a series of tapes of instrumental solos, and offers copies on open reel at 3.75 ins. per second. These will highlight his reputation for good transfers from early records, and anyone interested should contact him at [REDACTED] Worthing, Sussex. He has prepared a list of 19 tapes of instrumental recordings that he can supply, from Accordion to Zither.

Another service comes from Jim Goodall, who has written in this magazine at some length on acoustic gramophone reproduction and tells me he is prepared to take on the mending of broken gramophone motors and soundboxes. All interested are asked to get in touch with him [REDACTED] St. Andrews, Fife KY16 9YB, Scotland. He is also secretary of the East Fife branch of the Society.

The glossy magazine Sounds Vintage has now completed the six issues of its first

year. Those who take it will already know that it is given over to early talking machines and wireless in about 50:50 proportions, with articles from people of repute in the hobby. A note from the publishers warns of the effect of the recent post increases on subscription rates for next year. At the time of writing these are:-

Surface Mail anywhere £5.80

U.S.A. airmail £8.00

Australia airmail £8.80.

The subscription department is at 28 Chestwood Close, Billericay, Essex.

It occurred to me the other day that there has never within my ken been any work done on the history of the fixing of 78 as a suitable speed for shellac records; for thirty years owners of gramophones were expected to grope about with the speed control and re-set it to the recommended rate of revolutions given on the record, if any. Consequently, one used to hear the most frightful caterwauling from front parlours as one walked along a street, and this was responsible for giving the gramophone a bad name, and a gramophone was not considered in the house where I was young, for this reason. Was there an international agreement on fixing the speed at 78 r.p.m., and why did Columbia in the United Kingdom stand out at 80 so late? Once upon a time, Columbia pot-boilers like 'Nymphs and Shepherds' and Clara Butt recordings were transferred to 45 r.p.m. records, and these must have been difficult for those with perfect pitch to live with. Most Clara Butt records, by the way, had the key printed on the label for amateur accompanists, and the latter were sometimes puzzled by the speed and pitch variation.

A biography of Edison is usually hard to resist because the man had so many facets of genius, but he was never so well served as in Matthew Josephson's work of the 1960s and most subsequent biographies give the impression of being a distillation of this. A recent book 'Thomas Edison, Genius of Electricity' by Keith Ellis calls upon W.K.L. Dickson (1894), F.A. Jones (1907) and W.A. Simonds (1935) as well as Josephson, and with plenty of illustrations is frankly directed at readers in their late teens who may never have known much about his achievements. Therefore, it cannot be expected to bristle with originality, to have illustrations that we have not all seen before, contain anecdotes we don't all know about, and it doesn't, but there may be a few illustrations - half-tones and line-drawings - that may be new to some readers: there are bound to be some wild statements that members will fall out with, but are there not some among us who have flown their flags upside down at some time or another? A point that Mr. Ellis makes which has not been greatly stressed before is the number of times that Edison started lines that had excellent prospects and turned aside from them, allowing others to take the credit, citing in particular the electric locomotive, thermionic valve, microphone and wireless, while the inventor trudged other tracks that really led nowhere, such as iron-ore crushing and rubber from golden rod. No mention is made of Portland cement, which undoubtedly comes outside the title of the book. Publication is by the Priory Press Ltd., 49 Lansdown Place, Hove, Sussex BN3 1HF, and it costs £3.50, although prices may vary in these indecisive times.

Gracie Fields, who died in September, served the gramophone well, her recorded repertory running to three or four-hundred 78s at a conservative estimate, with a very few microgrooves in the 1950s. The gramophone reciprocated generously in following her every style, comedy and nonsense songs, hits of the moment, sentimental and serious songs and hymns, and film sound-tracks: it went with her into the Holborn Empire twice, into a hospital ward, at home and abroad with the forces in the last war, and presented

her in company with her first husband Archie Pitt, parents, brother Tommy, sister Betty and comedian brother-in-law, Duggie Wakefield, and in 1938 allowed her to thank her public after recovering from a serious illness. Indeed in the 1930's so many were her records that she seemed contracted to two recording companies simultaneously. Her recordings first appeared on H. M. V. in 1928, turning to Regal-Zonophone, and were on Rex from September 1935 to October 1938, with re-couplings being issued until December 1940. She re-appeared on Regal-Zonophone through the war, and later Decca issued her 78s until the early 1950s, when undoubtedly public interest moved away from her. After the end of 1953 when three l.p.s had been marketed, very little new material appeared, and as the interest in variety waned she moved more and more into retirement. It was extraordinary that Gracie Field's signature tune 'Sally' was essentially a song that should have been sung by a man, but this is quite commonplace especially in operatic circles, and nobody else is ever heard to try and sing it in public. Although I recall being taken to see her in 'Mr. Tower of London' when a boy, very little if any of it still lingers in the memory. I never saw Gracie Fields again in person, but because we shared the same birthday at a cold and unfashionable time of the year, tended to follow her progress. There was a warmth of personality that drew people of all types to her, and no other top British star has had his or her performing life so well registered for future generations to assess.



ILLUSTRATION

Decca Junior Model C portable gramophone in polished cowhide case. Unlike the other Junior models, which had 'Crescendo Junior' soundboxes, Model C boasted a 'Decca' soundbox. The price in 1926 was £5 5s., compared with £3 10s for the black leathercloth version. The full-size models became 'Telesmatic' in 1926 - i.e., they had a new, rubber-necked 'Telesmatic' soundbox and a more pronounced flare to the tone-arm and elbow. Prices ranged from £4 for the black version to £9 for the teak model for use in tropical climates.

The R. 34, Britain's giant airship, was launched near Glasgow in March 1919. Carrying a crew of thirty people, this large vessel flew without a stop and in partly adverse weather, from its hangar at East Fortune (near Edinburgh) to New York (Mineola, Long Island) in 108 hours from July 2nd to July 6th 1919. It was the first dirigible airship to cross the Atlantic. Four days later it started the return journey, which took only seventy-five hours from July 10th to July 13th. On its arrival at Pulham, Norfolk, the airship was carrying a Columbia Grafonola and a supply of Columbia records which the crew had accepted as a gift while in the U.S.A.

The reason for the gift was as follows:-

The R. 34, which had arrived in America on a Sunday morning, had carried a small British-made portable gramophone which had become unplayable while over the Atlantic. (I believe this machine was a Decca - F.A.) (Yes, it was - Ed.) This machine had been the crew's sole source of amusement, and the news of the breakdown became known to the Americans, probably through radio messages. Arrangements were accordingly made for the Grafonola and records to be taken by automobile to the crew as soon as the dirigible arrived over Long Island. The arrangements were carried out by the Columbia Graphophone Company of New York.

Edison also presented an 'Army and Navy' model phonograph and fifty records to the crew who had landed at Roosevelt Field, as a personal gift. Captain Greenfield, who received the gift on behalf of Major Scott, also received a letter from Edison which read: 'I have been greatly interested in your exploit as it is the opening of a new epoch in human progress. Were it not for some important experiments I have on hand I would have given myself the pleasure of a call on you to extend, in person, my hearty congratulations on your great achievement. Will you give me the pleasure of accepting one of my phonographs with some records and carry the same with you on your return trip in commemoration of the first air voyage to America. Wishing you a pleasant and safe return and with my compliments to you and your associates, I remain - Thomas A. Edison.'

(One wonders which of the two machines the crew found more satisfactory. And whether the phonograph played cylinders or discs. And whether either or both still exist. And....what went wrong with the usually reliable Decca? - Ed.)

In the same month as the events described above, the General Manager of the London office of The Talking Machine World (an American talking machine trade paper) reported the formation of the 'London Edison Society' with

the following enthusiastic note:

'To the Chairman, Norman F. Hillyer, and other officers of the London Edison Society, we would tender our congratulations upon the fruition of their efforts to consolidate and maintain the interests of those whose loyalty to the cylinder has remained unshaken, even throughout the war period when new Edison records were unobtainable. From all we hear, by the way, it seems likely that the Edison Corporation will, in the future, concentrate almost exclusively upon disc output for this market at any rate. There is, however, little prospect of early future consignments in bulk, owing, as we are given to understand, to the American demand being so much ahead of supplies. For such a super quality record as the Edison there is complete scope this side for big business and the sooner it is looked after the better. A wish and a want echoed by all Edisonites'.

The above piece was found for us by Frank Andrews, and he sends us also a letter written to the Talking Machine News in October 1919 by C.W.Miles, our first Recording Secretary:

Dear Sir,

With reference to the excellent letter from Mr. Lambe in your October issue, I should like to urge some enterprising band of manufacturers to start making a celluloid 200 thread record, 4½ inches long, and retailing at not more than 2/6d. I feel, however, that this plea is rather like a voice crying in the wilderness.

I have, for some time, urged the engagement of British artists to sing the best type of British Music (e.g. the Gilbert and Sullivan operas), and so have many others.

All of the cylinderites in the Kingdom would welcome some relief from the Yankee voice and type of humour(?) that is doled out to us on the Blue Amberols. I am not denying that a great many gems have appeared on the Blues but it is an undoubted fact that there is an immense field of music to be recorded and songs to be sung to the cylinder public.

Any discite who has not heard a good Blue Amberol reproduction is invited to attend the meetings of the City of London Phonograph Society at the Food Reform restaurant in High Holborn (Furnival Street) on the last Thursday of each month. The number of converts to the cylinder that have been made, from time to time, is surprising and would be quadrupled if the Blues had a more extensive repertoire more to the tastes of Britishers and sung by British artists.

Yours faithfully,

C.R. Miles,

[REDACTED], N.W.3

From the early 1920's Victor issued some records that were different from the regular entertainment fare of the day. At first, they were included in the black label popular series, but later on they were put in a separate series.

Most record collectors have in their minds phonographic mileposts that allow them to estimate the date of issue of the records they collect. The special series popular records have until now been a mystery to me, therefore with Brian Rust's Victor Master Book in hand, I decided to resolve the sequence of events at Victor in the release of the Hot Dance, Race and Old Familiar series of records. I regret that I cannot say what the Gramophone Co. did with their releases of similar material, since that information was not available in my source book.

There seemed to be four eras. The first consisted of releases made before the summer of 1928. Victor released all the subject categories in their main popular series. These began with Vernon Dalhart's contribution to the 'Old Familiar' selections of the acoustic era of the early 1920's and was accelerated with the coming of electrical recording. Up to February 1928, Victor recording technicians made a total of six field trips. Most of the venues were in the south. Five of the expeditions were of a month's duration and included stops at two or more cities. The results of all these sessions were issued in the Victor black label popular series. These records were exclusively Hot Dance, Race or Old Familiar in content. They were issued for the first time on Catalogue numbers 19750 to 21500, interspersed with records of regular fare which I would call 'Concert Variety'.

The second era appeared to be between the summer of 1928 and the summer of 1930. There were begun three new series of black label records. They were the V38000, V38500 and V40000 series. By the summer of 1930, the 38000 series, which was called Hot Dance, had reached 38145. The 38500's, which included Race records, had reached 38531. The Old Familiar series had spanned the numbers V40000 to V40335.

The third era I found was from the summer of 1930 to the early summer of 1933. The reason for its introduction is not clear. The series that it replaced had not run out of numbers, nor had there been a corporate change. Nevertheless, the 23000 and 23500 series were introduced to replace the V38000's, V38500's and V40000's. The 23000 series was reserved for Hot Dance and Race records, while the 23500 series contained 'Old Familiar' - a similar style is known today as 'Country and Western'.

The 23000's went as far as 23432, while the 23500's got to 23859. At that point, both categories began to be issued on the new Bluebird label at the reduced price of 35 cents. The date was March 1933. From this point the fourth era begins and all subsequent Hot Dance, Race and Old Familiar records were issued as Bluebird, beginning at B5000. To reduce the foregoing words into a capsule form that may be more readily seen I have included the following chart (on next page):

	Old Familiar	Hot Dance	Race
Summer 1925 to Summer 1928	All Categories were included in black label popular series 19750 - 21500		
Summer 1928 to Summer 1930	V40000 - V40355	V38000 - V38146	V38500 - V38863
Summer 1930 to early 1933	23500 - 23859	23000 - 23432	
After March 1933	All categories released on Bluebird, B5000- upwards.		

The Body and Soul of the Gramophone

by Jim Goodall

Horns, Pipes & Echoes

A soundbox, however well designed and adjusted it may be, can produce only a very mediocre sound if it is not provided with a good horn to back it up. The design of the horn is as vital to the gramophone as that of the soundbox.

The technical and mathematical quantities involved in the designing of horns are legion and deeply complicated. The horn is probably the most complicated part of the gramophone to design and manufacture. As I am neither a scientist nor a mathematician, I am completely out of my depth in this area and really have no right to be spouting about horns, with which far more knowledgeable people than myself have dealt comprehensively in their writings.

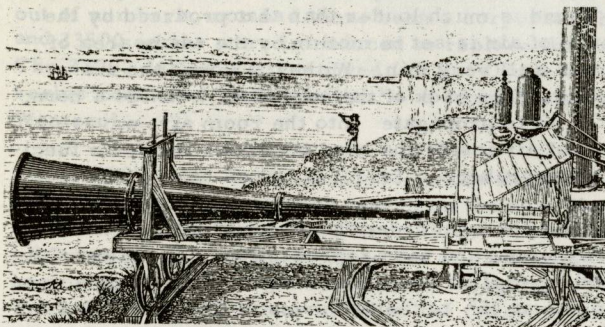
If you place the corner of your fingernail in the groove of a revolving record, the music can be faintly heard. The sound is weak, as the waves are propagated by a very small area of the fingernail. Try the same thing with the corner of a crisp bank note. The sound is now stronger as a greater area of paper is caused to vibrate and set in motion more air than did the fingernail. (This is the principle of the Lumière Pleated Diaphragm). Now take a soundbox and hold it by itself so that the needle rests in the groove and try to hold it steady so that the needle squarely follows the groove. The resulting sound is much louder than that produced by the banknote because a still greater mass of air is set in motion by the whole area of the diaphragm, but the reproduction is still very thin. Without a horn, the air waves are dissipated as they come out of the back of the soundbox. Inside a horn, the column of air is set in motion so as to propagate into the room air-waves of much greater magnitude. The mass of air inside the horn performs the same function as the rigid cone of a wireless loudspeaker.

Both H. M. V. and Columbia used folded horns in order that a good length of horn could be fitted into a cabinet and still give good bass reproduction. The latest Columbia development was the folded Plano-reflex horn whose right-angled bends were flattened on the outside to form a plane at 45° to the two arms of the bend. This acted like a mirror to reflect the sound waves directly round the bend and keep them

parallel to the lay of the next section of the horn. The H.M.V. Re-entrant horn, another solution to the problem of folding a horn to fit inside a cabinet, was described by P.W. Temple in 'Hillandale' for December 1977. The bifurcated horn on some Columbia cabinet models also has a spreading effect which gives a very comfortable and pleasing tone. The Daddy of the all was E.M.Ginn, whose Hand-Made Gramophones depended on extra large papier-mâché horns for the quality of their performance. These horns were too long and wide at the mouth to be contained in a cabinet, and so had to be fitted externally. Some of the largest models had horns flaring out to a diameter of three feet at the mouth.

One or two enthusiasts have built themselves exponential horns according to what is reckoned to be the ideal specification of 32 feet long and seven feet across the mouth. It has been acknowledged that the reproduction from 78's played on these machines is superior to that from any 'hi-fi' system. In the main, it appears, the longer the horn, the closer one gets to a completely faithful reproduction of the lowest audible frequencies. This holds good up to 32 feet, but beyond that point no further improvement is possible, for if the length is increased still further, there is a tendency for the higher sound waves to be attenuated by the resistance along the sides of the sound duct, while lower frequencies less prone to attenuation get through unscathed. I think the reason why 32 feet is the optimum length is that the wavelength of the lowest audible frequency is 32 feet, so that a 32-foot horn contains exactly one complete modulation of the lowest audible frequency. (The pipes producing the lowest note on a grand organ are 32 feet long.)

Listening to a range of phonographs with different horns at the August meeting of the Society in London, I noticed that with the later models having horns two feet or more in length and flared at the mouth, the tone was fuller and clearer. With the Cygnet horns, the increased length gave a vastly improved quality of reproduction - so good, in fact, as to be better than many disc gramophones produced in later years. I also noticed that conical horns tended to emit the sound in a narrow concentrated beam so that, away from that beam, reception was quite poor, while near the phonograph, the sound could be unpleasantly strident. Lighthouses have long, tapered conical fog horns - made like that in order to throw out a concentrated beam of sound in the direction from which most shipping approaches.



This view of a revolving fog siren is taken from 'Sound' by John Tyndall (Third Edition published 1875). It is operated by steam, which is forced through slits in a pair of discs, one of which rotates. A sort of cross between an Auxetophone, a Sound Magnifying Graphophone and a Calliope!

CORRESPONDENCE

Horns, sound effects and echoes in enclosed spaces have always fascinated me, and although this may be drifting away from the subject, I will mention one or two ways in which I have studied the subject. Knowing that the reproduction from a gramophone soundbox retains its bass register better with a longer tube between the tone-arm and the flare of the horn, I lifted the playing deck complete with motor and tone-arm from a cheap gramophone I had at the time and placed it across the top of the case so that the base of the tone-arm overhung. Into the tone-arm I inserted a hose-pipe about six feet long and put my ear to the other end. What I heard was a full tonal range, with the bass reproduced in full. With several yards of hose-pipe I found the bass was as full as before, but the treble sounded confused and distant. This suggests that, depending on the material used, there is an optimum combined length of tone-arm and horn. My record sounded far better through six feet of hose-pipe than it did with the gramophone in its original state!

My interest in how far sound can be conducted without distortion through a tube was deepened many years later when, by a lane near a Scottish loch, found a most perfect example of a singing drainpipe. It was about fifteen inches wide, about a quarter of a mile long, dry and made of concrete. Bowling a large round stone into it produced a clear, continuous musical note of about the middle register, the sound of the stone resembling that of a metal oxygen cylinder being rolled along. The ringing sound continued for three minutes, until the stone hit a grating or something at the other end, and the volume hardly diminished. The acoustics of the pipe were so fascinating that I had to repeat the experiment three times!

Before moving into a pre-fab. some years before I retired, I tried an experiment while one of the rooms was still empty. I placed an H.M.V. table grand on the floor facing a corner and a certain distance from it, so that the floor and two walls formed an extension of the horn. This produced a marked improvement in tone from an orchestral record, although it did depend on having the machine the right distance from the corner.

Since the year dot, echoes have held an endless fascination for me by way of their propensity for conjuring up vivid imagination of vastness, depth and mystery, and of mysterious uncharted cavities lying at unknown depths and leading to unknown destinations. Hence the fascination of plumbing the depths of wells and mineshafts by dropping stones down and listening for the sound as they fell: and the acoustics can be very interesting. I started with manhole gratings, which sometimes cover quite deep holes, but I have found that disused mineshafts provide the best subjects for experiment. Differences in depth and in the type of rock into which they are cut or material with which they are lined provide useful analogies with horn construction. For full bass reproduction, for example, a long stem of non-absorbent material is needed. A horn made entirely of untreated wood would have to be too short to give full bass reproduction, as it would otherwise muffle the treble - a wood-lined mineshaft, for example, absorbs too much sound to produce an echo. Incidentally, one could create an entirely new collection of unusual sound and echo effects on record by visiting some of these out-of-the-way sites with a tape-recorder.

CORRESPONDENCE

Berea, South Africa.

27th July 1979

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

I would like to pick up one or two points from your 'Chairman's Chat' in June 'Hillandale', in the paragraph in which you say '.....it occurred to me that Berliner provided a form of record that could be mass-produced over ten years before Edison did.....acid-etched records were rather more effective than Edison's tinfoil.' And, lastly, the comment re Edison's having (you claim) 'purloined' wax recording from the Graphophone people. None of these statements should be allowed to go unchallenged, especially as they appear in a 'specialist' publication which some may assume to be unfailingly authoritative.

On the question of mass production, one has only to refer to Edison's British Patent no. 1644 of April 24th 1878, where Edison explicitly describes the mass-production of recordings, and the use of wax instead of tinfoil. To quote from the Patent: '.....Sometimes tinfoil is used.....; sometimes a thin sheet or leaf of metal is placed upon a piece of paper having a surface of paraffin or similar material. Sometimes the metallic surface is copper, and where a matrix has been made of steel or iron by electrotype deposit, or otherwise, upon the phonogram it may be hardened and used for impressing a sheet or roller of metal, and thereby the original phonogram can be reproduced indefinitely in metal that may be hardened and used for any reasonable length of time.....'

'The material upon which the record is made may be metal foil, such as tin.....Paper or other materials may be used, the same being coated with paraffin or other hydrocarbons, waxes, gums or lacs.'

Bearing in mind that Edison employed tin foil in December 1877 but patented the use of other materials, including wax-coated paper, within weeks of his invention, it seems to me as absurd to compare Berliner's acid-etched 'plates' of 1895-1900 with Edison's experimental tinfoil as to compare the Wright Brothers' aeroplane with those of the late 1920's and early 1930's. One must never lose sight of the fact that Berliner's 'patent' was 10 years later than Edison's and it took him from 1887 until 1895 before even a crude instrument was produced of his Gramophone, and at least 1900 before it worked.

Although Edison had outlined the means of duplicating records as early as 1878, the need for duplicating did not really seriously arise until the introduction of the Spring Motor phonograph (for use in private homes) in 1896. Edison was moulding records at least in his laboratory from 1889.

Yours sincerely,

W. Hecht.

The Chairman replies:

Yes, of course Edison foresaw the possibility of mass-producing records - but he did not actually put it into practice until 1901-2 commercially, a delay which merely serves to emphasise my point - that Berliner got things moving with much greater dispatch. Mr. Hecht tells us we must not lose sight of the 'fact' that it took Berliner from 1887 to 1895 to produce even a crude Gramophone, and that it did not work until 1900. Well, that is a fact I would willingly lose sight of, for it just 'aint so! Berliner Gramophones, in working order, were on sale to the British public in 1891. Of course, the 1900 model worked better, and the 1920 version was better still, but if you try to identify the word 'work' with quality of performance, then you must conclude that nothing 'works' until it is perfect. Since Per-

fection is generally accepted as being unattainable, it would follow from this that nothing ever works!

Now, this business of wax. Back in the 1890's, it was established that Edison's original recording system was an indentation process, and the Graphophone method one of incision. This was most recently clarified by Frank Andrews, discussing J. L. Young's account of the Edison invention ('Hillandale', February 1979, p. 192). The 'wax recording method' to which I referred in 'Chairman's Chat' was clearly the incision method - I am sorry if this was not evident. (I did not 'claim' that Edison 'purloined' the method: I merely said that if one claimed, as my correspondent had, that Berliner 'purloined' it, then one should logically make the same claim of Edison. I do not accuse anyone of purloining, and I do not see how anyone can who was not working closely with the people concerned at the time.) The very wording of Edison's patent, quoted by Mr. Hecht, makes it quite clear that wax was merely an auxiliary, a coating for paper to make it more suitable for receiving and retaining indentations. He is not talking about wax on its own, or wax on a paper support, but about paper treated with wax, or foil with a wax backing.

Finally, in case any reader should misunderstand the tenor of Mr. Hecht's letter, I should explain that I have merely quoted passages from it which were relevant to the 'Chairman's Chat' and which I felt might be of general interest. I could continue the argument more or less ad infinitum, but I doubt whether anything would be gained by so doing, and I suppose what it boils down to is that to me, as a collector rather than a theoretician, what matters is not who thought of what possibilities first, but who succeeded in producing and selling machines and records which can now be hunted down and added to one's collection.

+++++

21.6.79

Dear Sir,

Mike Field, in his report of the Hereford Branch meeting of April 21st., mentions a cigarette box containing a mechanism for playing a small disc record which sported just one continuous groove on each of its sides (like most records - Ed.), the record in this case being broken.

Now I have an inadequate memory and cannot recall the exact details of the circumstances in which I became involved with a similar cigarette-box and record. I did not see either, and therefore do not know if they were similar to Jack Maloney's, but I do know that my involvement began with a telephone call.

A party whose name I cannot recall telephoned, out of the blue: he had been given my name as someone who knew about records. His problem was that he had a cigarette box which had the mechanism for playing a record when the lid was opened. The announcement was 'Have a cigarette', which he knew from an identical box which had the disc in play-able, although worn, condition. In some way or other, the Victoria & Albert Museum was involved - I think they had this other box with the record. In any event, the question was, Who had pressed the records? A verbal description did not reveal much useful information, but one small clue with reference to a marking in the shellac put my nose in the right direction. I could not give an answer there and then, but I hung up with a promise to ring back.

I went straight to one of my ordinary commercial Decca records and found the clue I was

looking for: I rang the party back and told him I thought the Decca Record Co. Ltd. were the manufacturers of the discs.

The next question was, Did I know if they kept the matrices, which of course I did not, but I had one contact at Decca, and so I put the party on to him. (Apparently my party was in the electronics world and had an association with the big Philips firm.) Later I had a further 'phone call. The matrices were of Decca manufacture, and were still in existence: moves were afoot to press a number of copies of the record (which has the same message on both sides). Whether or not the negotiations for the pressing of new copies produced material results, I know not, and I cannot, for the life of me, remember who it was who rang me up.

'Have a cigarette!'

Yours faithfully,
Frank Andrews.

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